

THE SOCIAL IMPACT ON ELEMENTARY STUDENTS
WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS

Susan Doerr

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The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751

ABSTRACT

<u>Doerr</u>	<u>Susan</u>	<u>M.</u>
(Writer) (Last Name)	(First)	(Initial)

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This study sought to define the socialization needs of students in Wisconsin, whose parents are incarcerated. A review and critique of related literature indicated that there are unintended consequences on children due to the incarceration of their parents. These consequences include a low self-concept, impaired school achievement, poor peer relationships, changes in behavior, and isolation.

Information was collected through reviewing and critiquing current literature regarding the effects of having parents in jail/ prison on their family, especially their

children. The information and data gathered, through this research, is intended to help counselors and schools to provide meaningful services to students and their families with information that can be used in designing and modifying future guidance and counseling programs. Strengths and weaknesses of this research are given, as well as recommendations for future research.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, in 1999, an estimated 721,500 State and Federal prisoners were parents to 1,498,800 children under the age of 18 (Mumola, 2000). An estimated 10 million more children have had parents who were imprisoned at some point in their lives (Simmons, 2000).

In general, our parents are the first people we know and with whom we create our first bonds. They provide, with few exceptions, shelter, security, love, and nourishment. However, our current society is an ever-changing world. These changes include an increasing probability that children will live without adequate adult supervision and in homes that are unstable and violent. Children will be disconnected from their family members, particularly their fathers. In addition, they may have little contact with grandparents or other extended family members; and could have parents with few social supports from within the community (Institute for Families in Society, 1997).

Relationships are fundamental building blocks to our families, communities, state, and country. Relationships are affected by the economy, the society, and individual actions of the people involved. Children learn how to build and foster relationships by watching how their parents and family interact with each other and society. Being a member of a family confirms and develops our sense of identity and self-esteem. Any changes within the family affect all members of that family. Family cohesion and harmony have been determined to be significant variables in the development of positive self-esteem in children (Napoli, Kilbride, & Tebbs, 1992).

In today's society it is hard to define what family is; however, it is possible to give examples of what we need from our families. Children need families for health,

mental, social, moral, and emotional development. Strong families provide children with a sense of belonging and identity and create hope for the future (Institute of Families in Society, 1997). Major disruptions to the home environment inevitably take their toll on normal family life, including the education of children (Rafferty, 1997).

In 1954, Abraham Maslow postulated, based on his observations as a humanistic psychologist, that there is a general pattern of needs recognition and satisfaction that people follow in generally the same sequence. He also theorized that a person could not recognize or pursue the next higher need in the hierarchy until her or his currently recognized need was substantially or completely satisfied (Gawel, 1997).

Table 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs:

Level	Type of Need	Examples
1	Physiological	Thirst, hunger
2	Safety	Security, stability, protection
3	Love and Belongingness	To escape loneliness, love and be loved, and gain a sense of belonging, affection, identification
4	Esteem	Self-respect, the respect of others
5	Self-actualization	To fulfill one's potential

Chronic stress associated with unstable homes and relationships interfere with the child's mastery of developmental tasks (Institute for Families in Society, 1998). Children and adolescents' mental health refers to that facet of overall health that relates to self-realization (awareness of self and one's ability to reach goals), self-esteem (way one thinks about oneself), and the ability to interact effectively with family, school and community (National Mental Health Association [NMHA], 2000).

Everyone attempts to meet their needs and the needs of their children as described by Maslow. A family who is dealing with the incarceration of a parent may need to re-

examine their basic level in Maslow's hierarchy. This is apparent especially if the person incarcerated provided financial and emotional support; the remaining members need to focus on Maslow's level one, the physiological level. The resident parent, or guardian, needs to determine how to provide for the family's basic needs.

In addition, when a member of the family is removed, children may feel a loss of security. The family will need to determine methods to help them reestablish a sense of safety. The restructuring of love and belonging will need to be developed if the physiological and safety needs of Maslow's hierarchy, are to be substantially satisfied. Children who have a parent in jail contend with feelings such as anxiety, shame, sadness, grief, social isolation, and guilt (Hagan, 2000). It is crucial to help children through this stage, before they look for love and belonging by engaging in risky behaviors, such as developing negative relationships or joining gangs.

Hopelessness, or negative expectations toward the future, has been proposed to be related to negative views of oneself and the world (Kazdin, Rodgers, and Colbus, 1986). Many of the successes and failures that people experience in many areas of life are closely related to the ways that they have learned to view themselves and their relationships with others (Purkey, 1988).

How children see and respond to a given situation will affect all aspects of their life. The need for self-respect and self-esteem is the desire for strength, achievement, adequacy, mastery and competence, confidence in the face of others, independence, and freedom. The need for the esteem of others is the desire for reputation or prestige (defined as respect or esteem from other people), status, fame and glory, dominance, recognition, attention, importance, dignity, or appreciation (Napoli, Kilbride, & Tebbs,

1992). Self-efficacy develops when students learn that they have some control over certain things in their environment and that they are not helpless (Winfield, 1994).

It is estimated that as many as 1.53 million children have at least one parent in prison at any given time (Children of Incarcerated Parents [ChIPs], 2001). Children who live in a household with one parent are substantially more likely to have family incomes below the poverty line than are children who live in a household with two parents (Administration for Children & Families, 2001). As a group, these children are far more likely than their peers to be at risk for substance abuse, school failure, delinquency, and substitute care-giving due to traumatic separations (ChIPs, 2001). Children whose parents are incarcerated are often ostracized or made fun of by other children and even adults. These children often exhibit aggressive behavior or may withdraw or become very depressed (Howard, 1994). An understanding of the effects on children who have a parent incarcerated will help the family, schools, and community assist these children in coping with the situation. Therefore, the research hypothesis for this study is that children with an incarcerated parent will exhibit many of the aforementioned negative consequences, such as low self-esteem, poor coping and social skills, depression, aggression, and social withdrawal.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to review and critique the literature as it relates to the socialization needs of elementary school children whose parents are incarcerated in Wisconsin during the 2000-2001 school year.

The review will focus on the following objectives:

1. To identify the number of persons within Wisconsin and Marathon County who have been incarcerated and have children.
2. To identify the affects incarceration has on the family.
3. To identify the affect of parental incarceration on the child (ren).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Incarcerate – 1. to imprison; jail. 2. to confine.

The National Prisoner Statistics (NPS) distinguishes prisoners in custody from those under jurisdiction (Beck, 2000):

Custody of a prisoner – a State must hold that person in one of its facilities.

Jurisdiction – a State has legal authority over the prisoner; prisoners may be in the custody of a local jail, another state's prison, or other correctional facility.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

The number of minor children with a parent in a State or Federal prison rose by over 500,000, from 936,500 in 1991 to 1,498,800 in 1999. In 1999, State and Federal prisons, held an estimated 667,900 fathers and 53,600 mothers of minor children (Mumola, 2000). Over 80% of the female prisoners in the United States are mothers, and 70% of them are single parents (What About the Children, 2000). A majority of State (55%) and Federal (63%) prisoners reported having a child under the age of 18 (Mumola, 2000). Of the Nation's 72 million minor children, 2.1% had a parent in State or Federal prison in 1999 (Mumola, 2000).

Forty-six percent of the incarcerated parents reported living with their children prior to being taken into custody. As a result, there were an estimated 336,300 U.S. households with minor children affected by the imprisonment of a resident parent (Mumola, 2000). A total of 300,900 households with minor children were missing a resident father, resident mothers were missing from 35,400 households (Mumola, 2000). Twenty-two percent of all minor children with a parent in prison were under 5 years old. The majority (58%) of the minor children reported by State and Federal inmates were less than 10 years old, and the average age of these children was 8 years old (Mumola, 2000). Table two presents information on the numbers of American households affected by the resident parent becoming incarcerated.

Table 2. Estimated households with minor children affected by the imprisonment of a resident parent, 1999.

Total	336,300
State Prison	291,000
Fathers	259,900
Mothers	31,100
Federal Prison	45,300
Fathers	41,000
Mothers	4,300

When asked who is currently caring for their minor children, over 80% of inmate parents said that their child was now living with the child's other parent. About 20% of the parents cited grandparents and other relatives as caregivers, and 2% had a child in a foster home, agency, or institution. Fathers cite the child's mother as the current caregiver; mothers cite the child's grandparents or other relatives (Mumola, 2000).

In both State and Federal prison, a majority of the parents were sentenced for either violent offenses, such as homicide, sexual assault, and robbery, or drug trafficking. Violent offenses were the most common type of crime for which parents were serving time in State prison. Two-thirds of fathers and three-quarters of mothers in Federal prison were convicted of drug offenses. In State prison, fathers were more likely to be sentenced for violent offenses and robbery than the child's mother was. Whereas, mothers were more likely to be sentenced for drug offenses and fraud than fathers were. Table 3 reveals the offenses of inmate parents in State prison in 1997 (Mumola, 2000).

Table 3. 1997 Offenses of inmate parents in the United State's state prisons by gender.

1997 Offense	Total percentage of offenders	Percent of male parents	Percent of female parents
Violent offenses	43.9 %	45.4 %	26.0 %
Homicide (a)	10.9	11.1	8.6
Sexual assault (b)	8.3	8.8	1.7
Robbery	13.2	13.8	6.4
Assault	9.7	9.9	7.2
Other violent	1.8	1.8	2.1
Property offenses	21.6 %	21.1 %	28.3 %
Burglary	10.2	10.6	5.4
Larceny	4.6	4.3	8.5
Motor vehicle theft	1.5	1.6	1.2
Fraud	2.8	2.1	11.3
Stolen property	1.6	1.7	1.3
Other property	0.9	0.9	0.6
Drug offenses	23.9 %	23.0 %	35.1 %
Possession	10.1	9.7	14.8
Trafficking	13.1	12.7	19.0
Other drug	0.7	0.6	1.3
Public order offenses	10.3 %	10.3 %	10.4 %
Weapons	2.7	2.8	0.9
Other public-order	7.6	7.5	9.5
Other/ unspecified	0.2 %	0.2 %	0.3 %

Within Table 3, under violent offenses, (a) includes murder and manslaughter and (b) includes rape and other sexual assaults (Mumola, 2000).

Overall, the United States incarcerated 2,026,596 persons at year-end in 1999.

About 1 in every 137 residents in the United States and its Territories were incarcerated (Beck, 2000). Table 4 represents the total inmate population according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Beck, 2000):

Table 4. Number of people incarcerated in the United States and its Territories.

Prisons, jails and other facilities	Number of prisoners at yearend 1999
Federal and State prisons (excludes State prisoners in local jails)	1,284,894
Territorial prisons (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands)	18,394
Local jails	605,943
Facilities operated by or exclusively for the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service	7,675
Military facilities	2,279
Jails in Indian country	1,621
Juvenile facilities	105,790 (as of October 29,1997)

Not only has the number of inmates grown, the length of a person's incarceration within a facility has increased within the last decade. The increase in the Federal prison population is related to the increase in convictions and time served for incidents with drugs, weapons, and immigration violations (Beck, 2000). In 1998, prisoners sentenced for drug offenses constituted the largest group of Federal inmates (58 %) (Beck, 2000).

On average, parents expected to serve 103 months in Federal prison and 80 months in State prison (Mumola, 2000).

Overall, the largest growth in State inmates between 1990 and 1998 was among violent offenders, this accounted for 51 % of the growth (Beck, 2000). Other sources of growth in the State inmate population were drug offenders for 19 %, property offenders for 15 %, and public-order offenders for 15 % (Beck, 2000). The rise in State prison population is also attributed to an increase in parole violators, a decline in release rates and an increase in average time served (Beck, 2000).

Wisconsin had an increase of 10.9% in reported prisoners in 1999 (Beck, 2000). As previously stated, increases are due to increased lengths of time served and a decline in release rates. Due to these changes not all prisoners are kept within the state. Wisconsin housed 17 % of the inmates in private facilities and 562 state prisoners were placed in Federal or out- of- State facilities (Beck, 2000).

The population of Marathon County is 122,450. Persons under the age of 18 represent 27.9% of this population (Health Resources and Services Administration [HRSA], 1999). Captain J. Reed (personal communication, April 27, 2001) stated that there were 4,224 adult admissions to the Marathon County Jail in 2000. There were 3,416 males and 808 females incarcerated. The average length of stay for the inmates was 14.6 days. If there were no other caregiver or family member, social services would procure foster care for any child of a parent-arrested and/ or incarcerated. Captain Reed (2001) stated that children learn what they see at home. He reported dealing with grandchildren of the criminals he first dealt with when he started 25 years ago. Research

has shown that children of offenders are 5 times more likely to end up in prison themselves (Simmons, 2000).

The research on children of incarcerated parents indicates that the loss of a parental figure, especially the mother, has profound effects on the children and adolescents (Children of Incarcerated Parents [ChIPs], 1999). There is a loss of role modeling, support, and supervision, and the stigma and shame of societal labeling are ways in which the effects of parental imprisonment may affect children (Hagan, 2000). Children who are separated from their parents by incarceration can have a variety of strong emotions, exacerbated by the family situation. These may include anger, isolation, sadness, fear, anxiety, and guilt. These emotions and the youths reactions to them can lead to problems of violence, erosion of self-esteem and ‘risky’ or dysfunctional behaviors (ChIPs, 1999).

It is difficult to predict what the affect of having an incarcerated parent will have on a child. Although, generally seen as a negative event, there may be circumstances where it is a type of relief for the parent to be taken out of the home. Removing a negative influence from the home could yield positive effects. If a person who has been disruptive, offensive, or irresponsible at home is incarcerated, remaining family members may stabilize (Watts & Nightingale, 2000). However, if an otherwise responsible adult is removed from the home, the household would lose economic resources and social and emotional support (Watts & Nightingale, 2000).

Parental incarceration – and the crimes and arrests that precede it – cause chaos in the lives of these children, including traumatic separations and erratic shifts from one care giver to another (Seymour, 1998). Associated sociological and criminological

theories point to three prominent ways in which the effects of parental imprisonment on children might be understood. These include (1) the strains of economic deprivation; (2) the loss of parental socialization through role modeling, support, and supervision; and (3) the stigma and shame of societal labeling (Hagan, 2000). Many families feel stigmatized because another family member has been incarcerated and this feeling can be intensified due to the nature of the crime (Howard, 1994).

The impact of a mother's arrest and incarceration on a family is often more disruptive than that of a father's arrest and incarceration. That is because approximately two-thirds of incarcerated mothers were the primary caregivers for a least one child before they were arrested (Simmons, 2000). About 64% of mothers in State prison and 84% of those in Federal prison reported living with minor children prior to admission, compared to 44% and 55% of fathers, respectively (Mumola, 2000).

The withdrawal or loss of a parent can result in the reduction not only of economic capital, but also of the social capital of relationships among family members and the organization of family life toward the maintenance and improvement of life chances (Hagan, 2000). Family members may feel shame and embarrassment and many children of inmates may keep their parent's incarceration a secret and become quiet and reclusive. Often the families are labeled with 'guilt by association.' Frequently, a family will move in order to get away from the feeling that they are stigmatized (Howard, 1994). Another reason for moving may be due to where the parent is incarcerated. As of 1997, a majority of all inmates, 62% of State prisoners and 84% of Federal prisoners, were held more than 100 miles from their last place of residence (CBS News, 2000).

Single parent families experience numerous stressful and disruptive situations. Children who live in a household with one parent are substantially more likely to have family incomes below the poverty line than are children who live in a household with two parents (Moore & Halle, 2000). In addition, single parent families move more often than intact families (Galdwell, 1998). Due to the low income, families may need to move into low-cost housing. Families may, also, move closer to the incarcerated parent or away from a community that has ostracized the family. Moving to a new community may be one of the most stressful experiences a family faces. Studies show children who move frequently are more likely to have problems at school. Moves are even more difficult if accompanied by other significant changes in the child's life, such as a death, divorce, loss of family income, or a need to change schools (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry [AACAP], 1999).

When both home and school are changed simultaneously, children are especially unanchored. They lose their friends and must make new ones; they have to get used to a new school, new teachers, and new schoolwork that is often discontinuous with what they were doing previously (Rafferty, 1998).

One of the greatest stressors for both the inmate and the rest of the family to deal with is the change in the family roles (Howard, 1994). The parent at home is now responsible for making all the day to day decisions, as well as being completely responsible for the children's involvement with activities, health, and discipline. The single parent may feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of juggling caring for the children, maintaining a job, and keeping up with the bills and household chores (APA, 1997). Bills may include the typical house/ rent payments, as well as court and/ or

attorney costs, travel expenses, phone bills, and any other expenses that occur with the incarceration of a parent. Children of single mothers suffer economic disadvantages because women still earn only about 75% as much as their male counterparts. Weak social support erodes the single parent's capacity to cope with stress. Highly stressed parents tend to be psychologically unavailable to their children (Institute for Families in Society, 1997). According to the American Psychological Association (1996), single parent families deal with many other pressures and potential problem areas that the nuclear family does not have to face. Pressures that the family may face relate to family change such as: (a) Visitation and custody problems, (b) the effects of continuing conflict between parents, (c) less opportunity for parents and children to spend time together, (d) effects of the breakup on children's school performance and peer relations, (e) disruptions of extended family relationships, and/ or (f) problems caused by the parents' dating and entering new relationships.

In general, having a positive relationship with parents constitutes an important indicator of positive youth development. Youth who disconnect from parental influence are at a particular risk for delinquent activities and psychological problems (Moore and Halle, 2000). Children need families for healthy physical, mental, social, moral, and emotional development. Strong families provide children with a sense of belonging and identity and create hope for the future (Institute for Families in Society, 1997).

Not all children who have an incarcerated parent live with a family member. In 1999, almost a quarter (23%) of children lived with only their mothers, 4% lived with only their fathers, and 4% lived with neither of their parents (Moore & Halle, 2000). Additionally, 10 % of mothers and 2% of fathers in State prison reported having a child

living in a foster home or agency during their incarceration (Mumola, 2000). Two out of three children who enter foster care are reunited with their birth parents within two years (AACAP, 1998).

According to the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, children in foster care often struggle with the many issues. These issues may include the following (AACAP, 1998): (a) Blaming themselves and feeling guilty about removal from their birth parents, (b) wishing to return to birth parents even if they were abused by them, (c) feeling unwanted if awaiting adoption for a long time, (d) feeling helpless about multiple changes in foster parents over time, (e) having mixed emotions about attaching to foster parents, (f) feeling insecure and uncertain about their future, and (g) reluctantly acknowledging positive feelings for foster parents.

The Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 creates another stress for families where the parent is incarcerated. Within this act, parental rights can be terminated if a child has been in foster care 15 of the last 22 months (Simmons, 2000). On average parents in State prison are expected to serve a total of 80 months and parents in Federal prison expected to serve at least 10 years (Mumola, 2000).

Visiting the parent who is incarcerated is added pressure and a potential problem for families. In State prison only 40% of the fathers and 60% of the mothers had weekly contact with their children. More mothers (78%) reported some type of monthly contact with their children than fathers (62%) did. Among Federal inmates, about 70% of mothers and 60% of fathers had some type of weekly contact with their children (Mumola, 2000). These contacts were made through written letters, phone calls, or actual

visits. Table 5 demonstrates the percentage of parents who report contact with their children within the United State's state prisons (Mumola, 2000).

Table 5. Percentage of State inmate parents reporting monthly contact with their children in 1997.

Type of contact	Male	Female
Any	62.4 %	78.4 %
Phone	42.0 %	53.6 %
Mail	49.9 %	65.8 %
Visits	21.0 %	23.8 %

While visiting the parent in prison, or jail, family members and any gift they bring may be searched. Face to face visits can be especially hard on the children. They are confined to a small area near their parents for the duration of the visit, and they cannot make a lot of noise that would disrupt other visitors. Children are also expected to follow the posted rules (Howard, 1994).

Many theories agree that many of the successes and failures that people experience in many areas of life are closely related to the ways that they have learned to view themselves and their relationships with others (Purkey, 1988). Social interactions with peers build upon and refine the rules and norms of social interactions that children first encounter in their families (Moore & Halle, 2000). The emotions that surround a traumatic experience such as the imprisonment of a parent, can become a turning point initiating a pattern of unfavorable life choices (Hagan & Palloni, 1990).

The extent to which a child will be affected by parental incarceration depends on a large number of variables, including the age at which the parent-child separation occurs, length of the separation, health of the family, disruptiveness of the incarceration,

and the child's familiarity with the placement or new caregiver. Other variables may be the strength of the parent-child relationship, number and result of previous separation experiences, nature of the parent's crime, length of the parent's sentence, availability of family or community support, and degree of stigma that the community associates with incarceration (Seymour, 1998).

Dr. Denise Johnston, Director of the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena, California, has studied the impact of parental crime, arrest and incarceration on children's development. Her work is summarized in table 5 (Simmons, 2000).

Table 6. Effects on Children of Parental Crime, Arrest, and Incarceration.

Developmental Stage	Developmental Characteristics	Developmental Tasks	Influencing Factors	Effects
Infancy (0-2 years)	Total dependency	Attachment and trust	Parent-child separation	Impaired parent-child bonding
Early childhood (2-6 years)	Increased perception and mobility; incomplete individuation from parent	Sense of autonomy, independence and initiative	Parent-child separation; Trauma	Anxiety, developmental regression, acute traumatic stress, survivor guilt
Middle childhood (7-10 years)	Increased independence, ability to reason, importance of peers	Sense of industry, ability to work productively	Parent-child separation, enduring trauma	Acute traumatic stress and reactive behaviors
Early adolescence (11-14 years)	Increasing abstract thinking, future-orientated behavior, aggression, puberty	Ability to work productively with others, control of emotions	Parent-child separation, enduring trauma	Rejection of limits on behavior, trauma-reactive behaviors
Late adolescence (15-18 years)	Emotional crisis and confusion, adult sexual development, abstract thinking, independence	Achieves identity, engages in adult work and relationships, resolves conflicts with family and society	Parent-child separation, enduring trauma	Premature termination of parent-child relationship; intergenerational crime and incarceration

Source: Dr. Denise Johnston, "Effects of Parental Incarceration," in Gabel and Johnston, p.68.

Children, like adults, tend to express their feelings by their actions. Children of women in prison contend with feelings like anxiety, shame, sadness, grief, social isolation, and guilt (Hagan, 2000). Not all children respond the same when a parent is incarcerated. Children's reactions differ by the gender of the incarcerated parent: "acting out" behavior (e.g., running away or truancy) was associated with paternal incarceration and "acting in" behavior (e.g., crying, withdrawal) was associated with maternal incarceration (Weissman & LaRue, 1998).

Children give clues when they are over stressed or pressured by changes within their behavior. According to the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) some common signs that children show are (a) temper tantrums, (b) sudden dullness or apathy in a normally bright, alert child, (c) secretive behavior or staring into space by a usually carefree, boisterous child, (d) cheating in school, delinquent behavior, inability to study, or conversely, total absorption with studies to the exclusion of any diversion, and/or (e) unusual restlessness, agitation, poor eating, nail biting, twitching, or stuttering.

Little is known about how the causal role that the penal sanctioning of parents varies with the prior and continuing relationship between the parents, the race and gender of the parents, the prior and continuing relationships of parents with their children, the gender or age of the children, and the class and community circumstances from which the imprisoned parents and children come (Hagan, 2000). The children may suffer from multiple psychological problems including trauma, anxiety, guilt, shame, and fear. Negative behavioral manifestations can include sadness, withdrawal, low self-esteem, decline in school performance, truancy, and use of drugs or alcohol and aggression

(Simmons, 2000). There is speculation that the consequences of imprisoning parents can be substantial, especially when mothers are involved (Hagan, 2000):

The children of women in prison have a greater tendency to exhibit many of the problems that generally accompany parental absence including: low self-esteem, impaired achievement motivation, and poor peer relations. In addition, these children contend with feelings like anxiety, shame, sadness, grief, social isolation, and guilt. The children will often withdraw and regress developmentally, exhibiting behaviors of younger children, like bed wetting...As the children reach adolescence, they may begin to act out in anti-social ways. Searching for attention, pre-teens and teens are at high risk for delinquency, drug addition, and gang involvement (Women's Prison Association, 1995, p. 9).

A study of 36 children from five to 16 years old who were participating in a visitation program at a women's prison, found that three quarters of the children reported "...symptoms including depression, difficulty in sleeping, concentration problems, and flashbacks about their mother's crimes or arrests...[and] poor school performance" (Simmons, 2000, p.4). Children may have difficulties with separation anxiety, caretakers, school, antisocial behavior, and educational failure (Hagan, 2000).

Children react to situations they are placed the only way they know how, through their behavior. Some children choose not to talk or feel they shouldn't talk about what is bothering them. Within some families there may be an unwritten (or unnamed) rule about not talking with people about the family issues. Children watch their parents, and other adults, for clues on how to behave. Children seek to imitate and gain approval from their role models, whether good or bad (Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 2000).

Although people deal with stressful situations on a daily basis, too much stress can be harmful. Abundant evidence indicates that any kind of stress, if sufficiently intense and prolonged, can contribute to various kinds of illness (Krech, Crutchfield, Livson, Wilson, & Parducci, 1982). Too much stress can lead to headaches, stomach

upset and other health problems. When stress gets too high people may feel tired, angry, and/or sad or hopeless (Channing, 1994).

One of the initial emotions a family may feel is shock or denial when the parent is arrested. In addition, the family needs to cope with the trial and/ or sentencing of the parent. Next is the actual incarceration, into a jail or prison nearby or far away. Finally, there is the stress of staying in contact with the parent in prison. This may include transportation expenses, lodging concerns, phone bills (prisoners are only allowed to call out, so it is usually a collect call), and possible childcare expenses. This all contributes to stress experienced by the family or community regarding the incarceration.

When a parent is in jail or prison, children experience a range of negative emotions. They may experience feelings of guilt when their parent is in prison because they may not want to visit the parent. They often worry about how their parent is being treated and how they are doing. Sometimes, children may also blame themselves or the parent that remains with them. Many families of inmates mention that loneliness is probably the hardest stress to deal with on a day-to-day basis (Howard, 1994).

Another aspect of the children's life that may be affected by having a parent incarcerated is lowered self-esteem or self-concept. Self-esteem is learned through social interactions and accomplishing the tasks that we set out to do (Cooper, 1995). These expectations that we have about ourselves do not have to be based in reality. They are fostered through an individual's actions, behaviors, and beliefs about themselves. (Cooper, 1995).

Hopelessness and negative self-esteem are likely to be associated with social withdrawal, resulting in part from the perceived futility, helplessness, and lack of

confidence of social encounters. Limited social interactions with others are likely to foster diminished social reinforcement, withdrawal, or lack of approach responses on the part of others and, in a reciprocal fashion, further social withdrawal (Kazdin, Rodgers, and Colbus, 1986). How children see and respond to a given situation will affect all aspects of their life. It has been shown that people with low self-esteem often have little confidence in their abilities. If a child lacks self-confidence the risk is that no effort will be made toward attaining their goals.

When children are not putting forth effort they are usually assumed to be unmotivated. People who lack motivation are generally believed to be lacking in resiliency (Benard, 1995). Having a sense of purpose and a belief in a bright future manifests resilience. This can be gained by developing a goal direction, educational aspirations, achievement, motivation, persistence, hopefulness, optimism, and spiritual connectedness (Benard, 1995). The fact that all three domains emphasize areas in a person's life where there is contact with people, suggest that support from family, friends, teachers, and society as a whole is a very necessary part of what people need to become resilient and stay motivated. Resilient children maintain a high level of self-esteem, a realistic sense of personal control and a feeling of hope (Benard, 1995).

The more goals the students can accomplish the higher their self-confidence. By giving the students choices, they will learn that they do have some control in their lives. It is desirable that children develop a sense of autonomy. Autonomy is having a sense of one's own identity and an ability to act independently and to exert some control over one's environment. This means developing a sense of task mastery, internal locus of control, and self-efficacy (Benard, 1995).

In order to assist children in obtaining their goals and succeeding in reaching Maslow's fourth and fifth stages (esteem and self-actualization); adults need to address the risk factors. Risk factors for antisocial behavior within the family characteristics, as well as community and societal factors include the following:

Economic deprivation and unemployment that limit access to food, shelter, transportation, health care, etc., parental history of deviant behavior; favorable family/ community attitudes toward deviant behavior; harsh and/or inconsistent discipline; poor parental and/or community supervision and monitoring; low parental education (especially maternal education); family conflict; disruption in care giving; out-of-home placement; poor attachment between child and family; low community attachment and community disorganization, as evidenced by low parent involvement in schools, low voter turnout, and high rates of vandalism and violence; parental alcoholism; social alienation of the community; availability of drugs and guns; high community turnover; and exposure to violence, including violence in the home, community, and media (Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 2000, p. 2).

By addressing the risk factors, adults can help children increase their resiliency. Some longitudinal studies have consistently documented that between half and two-thirds of children growing up in families with mentally ill, alcoholic, abusive, or criminally involved parents or in poverty-stricken or war-torn communities do overcome the odds and turn a life trajectory of risk into one that manifests 'resilience.' Resilience is a term used to describe a set of qualities that foster a process of successful adaptation and transformation despite risk and adversity (Benard, 1995).

In study after study, there are at least two main conditions that help children succeed. The first is access to a second chance to succeed at something failed at before – going back to school, being helped to pass a class, getting a chance to correct a wrong and make it right, receiving concrete aid and an opportunity to reciprocate it (Coontz, 1995). The second factor, and perhaps the most critical factor influencing the

development of pro-social behavior, is attachment to at least one pro-social adult who believes in the child and provides unconditional acceptance and support (Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 2000). People are all born with an innate capacity for resilience, by which they are able to develop social competence, problem-solving skills, a critical consciousness, autonomy, and a sense of purpose (Benard, 1995). Benard's definition of autonomy is a sense of one's own identity and ability to act independently and to exert some control over one's environment (1995). Communication is also a factor.

Adults, school, and the community need to communicate clear expectations for all children. They need to be candid with children in defining acceptable behavior. In addition, when stating behavioral expectations, keep them short and relate them to the situation; the idea is to teach them, not to make them feel guilty (APA, 1997).

Relationships are considered to be one of the essential elements to happiness and success in life (Strong & DeVault, 1989; Tannen, 1986). In general, having a positive relationship with parents constitutes an important indicator of positive youth development. Social interactions with peers build upon and refine the rules and norms of social interaction that children first encounter in their families (Moore & Halle, 2000).

What most inspires a child to grow up caring about others is the caring that the child receives. Experts point out that when children feel a more secure base at home, they're more likely to venture out and pay attention to others; it's when they feel deprived of love and nurturing that they focus on themselves and their own needs (APA, 1997).

CHAPTER 3

Discussion and Recommendations

Most of the research pertaining to children of incarcerated parents has been done on a small-scale model. In addition, it was generally the incarcerated parents who were interviewed in order to obtain any information. There have been no longitudinal studies following the affect of incarceration on the families. Additionally, there have been few studies on the affects on children before, during, or after the incarceration.

The validity of the information may be skewed due to the honesty of the parent interviewed. The majority of the research found pertained to studies done in large cities within the United States; there was little information on the effects within smaller, more rural settings. The variables within research need to be evaluated. These include which parent is incarcerated and for what reason, the length of the incarceration, the number of children within the household prior to incarceration, and the families living conditions.

The affect, of having an incarcerated parent, on the family and children varies depending on the situation. If the parent previously had a negative influence on the family involving abuse, neglect, or violence, the absence of this parent may have a positive consequence for the family. The remaining parent and children may be in a less serious or harmful situation. On the other hand, if the parent was a strong support element within the family the effect of having this parent taken out of the child's life could be life altering.

The research has shown that the family suffers economically, socially, and emotionally. Due to less income the family needs to refocus their priorities in order to meet their physiological needs, food and shelter. The family support system may change

when extended family and society learn about the crime committed by the parent. There may be some stigma attached to the family or feelings of anger, guilt and depression.

When a parent is imprisoned, the family may need to move away from their home in order to be closer to the incarcerated parent or to escape the social stigma that is placed on their family. If the custodial parent is incarcerated, the children may need to stay with extended family members or placed in foster care. In some instances the children may be divided up, due to space and family acceptance.

Having a parent in prison may influence children on their outlook on life. They may feel that it is inevitable for them to also be placed in jail. A sense of hopelessness regarding their future may develop. Without positive role models the children will look at their peers for guidance and direction. In some cases, the children will join gangs to have a sense of connection and belonging.

Positive role models can assist children in planning for a future. Adults can help children set goals and gain a better self-concept when they show concern and assist children in succeeding in tasks. Adults need to help children find an activity they enjoy or spend time with them in order to make their life fun. We should help them look forward to each day and have a sense of hope for their future.

Future recommendations on this topic would be to look at the family situation prior to the parent being incarcerated. One could look into the family dynamics; determine the roles of the family members. In addition, researchers could investigate what the living conditions were before the incarceration or design a study that looks into the background differences and family circumstances. These are just a few of the variables that will need to be considered in future studies.

In addition, a study on support services for families in small rural communities would be informative. What is the stigma placed on the family, determine if there are different societal reaction to the family depending on the crime committed. When interviewing the families, collect data through the use of reliable and valid surveys and instruments. Interview the remaining parent or guardian regarding the affects on the family and the children within the home, community and school setting. Control for differences for repeat and for first time offenders. Investigate the percentage of rural and urban children who end up incarcerated.

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